

Amendments to the Claims are as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A magnetic head disposed on a rotary cylinder rotatable in a predetermined direction, and having a medium sliding surface substantially flush with a peripheral surface of the rotary cylinder, the magnetic head comprising:

a first shielding layer composed of a magnetic material;

a second shielding layer spaced from the first shielding layer substantially parallel thereto and composed of a magnetic material;

a magnetoresistive element provided between the first and second shielding layers and insulated from the first and second shielding layers by a nonmagnetic insulating layer; and

a marker layer disposed on a side of the first shielding layer remote from the magnetoresistive element so as to determine at the center in a track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element,

wherein the first and second shielding layers and the magnetoresistive element are exposed from the medium sliding surface while being inclined at a predetermined azimuth angle to the predetermined direction, and

wherein a major part of the marker layer is disposed inside two imaginary azimuth lines in the track-width direction, the imaginary azimuth lines extending straight in the predetermined direction through both end portions in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element, and both end portions of the marker layer are disposed outside the imaginary azimuth lines in the track-width direction.

2. (Currently Amended) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the marker layer is positioned so that a head center line extending straight in the predetermined direction through the center in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element passes through at the center in the track-width direction of the marker layer.

3. (Currently Amended) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the marker layer is positioned so that a normal line extending straight through the center in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element in a direction orthogonal to the track-width direction passes through atthe center in the track-width direction of the marker layer.

4. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the marker layer is composed of a magnetic material.

5. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the marker layer is composed of a nonmagnetic material.

6. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the marker layer is in contact with the first shielding layer.

7. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein another nonmagnetic insulating layer is provided between the marker layer and the first shielding layer.

8. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the medium sliding surface extends in the predetermined direction.

9. (Original) A magnetic head according to claim 1, wherein the medium sliding surface is curved in a direction orthogonal to the predetermined direction.

10. (Currently Amended) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus having a tape loading path in which a magnetic tape medium drawn out of a tape reel is wound on a rotary cylinder that is rotatable in a predetermined direction,

wherein the rotary cylinder has a magnetic head with a medium sliding surface substantially flush with a peripheral surface of the rotary cylinder, the magnetic head comprising:

a first shielding layer composed of a magnetic material;

a second shielding layer spaced from the first shielding layer substantially parallel thereto and composed of a magnetic material;

a magnetoresistive element provided between the first and second shielding layers and insulated from the first and second shielding layers by a nonmagnetic insulating layer; and

a marker layer disposed on a side of the first shielding layer remote from the magnetoresistive element so as to determine ~~at~~ the center in a track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element,

wherein the first and second shielding layers and the magnetoresistive element are exposed from the medium sliding surface while being inclined at a predetermined azimuth angle to the predetermined direction, and

wherein a major part of the marker layer is disposed inside two imaginary azimuth lines in the track-width direction, the imaginary azimuth lines extending straight in the predetermined direction through both end portions in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element, and both end portions of the marker layer are disposed outside the imaginary azimuth lines in the track-width direction.

11. (Currently Amended) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the marker layer is positioned so that a head center line extending straight in the predetermined direction through the center in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element passes through ~~at~~ the center in the track-width direction of the marker layer.

12. (Currently Amended) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the marker layer is positioned so that a normal line extending straight through the center in the track-width direction of the magnetoresistive element in a direction orthogonal to the track-width direction passes through ~~at~~ the center in the track-width direction of the marker layer.

13. (Currently Amended) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the tape loading path comprises:

guide posts provided on the upstream and downstream sides of the rotary cylinder to guide the magnetic tape medium drawn out of the tape reel onto the rotary cylinder; and

a capstan provided on the downstream side of the rotary cylinder to feed the magnetic tape medium.

14. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the marker layer is composed of a magnetic material.

15. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the marker layer is composed of a nonmagnetic material.

16. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the marker layer is in contact with the first shielding layer.

17. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein another nonmagnetic insulating layer is provided between the marker layer and the first shielding layer.

18. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the medium sliding surface extends in the predetermined direction.

19. (Original) A tape-medium reading and writing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the medium sliding surface is curved in a direction orthogonal to the predetermined direction.